OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS
Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff

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2015

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide the reader with accurate, detailed, detailed information for the Cutoff. Prior to this, it has been difficult to find accurate, and detailed, maps on the Internet.

The Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff was first pioneered in 1844. It's purpose was to bypass the long southward loop needed to go through Fort Bridger, and to get to Fort Hall with less mileage and effort. Until Salt Lake City was developed, Fort Hall was the best resupply point between Fort Laramie and both Oregon and California.

This report features two maps of the Cutoff trail and a GPS waypoint file, both in comma-limited (.csv) format and in GPS (.gpx) format. Theses files are embedded in this Adobe PDF file as Attachments. Initially, the Cutoff was used by people headed either to Oregon or California.

After Salt Lake City became a popular resupply destination, The California-bound traffic went through Fort Bridger and on to Salt Lake. The Oregon-bound traffic continued to use the Fort Hall resupply destination.

It is likely that the Cutoff continued to be popular for the Oregon-bound traffic until the building of the Lander Cutoff Road in 1858. The Lander Cutoff was an even shorter route to Fort Hall.

HISTORY

My research on the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy Party 1844-45, shows that they used a route that is the same, or nearly the same, as the Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff. This makes sense because Caleb Greenwood, and Isaac Hitchcock, were the guides for the party. I don't know why Hitchcock's name never became associated with the route.

Solomon Sublette's name became associated with the route, because he was the one who gave route information to Joseph E. Ware, who, in 1949, published "The Emigrant's Guide to California." Ware called it the "Sublette Cutoff."

During the "Oregon-California Emigrant Trail" days, there were three primary routes to use from South Pass,

Wyoming to the west coast. For Oregon-bound emigrants, the vast majority of them went through Fort Hall, using the Fort Bridger, or Sublette-Greenwood, or Lander Cutoff routes. For California-bound emigrants, they had the same options as the Oregon-bound emigrants but they had the additional options of using the Salt Lake City & City-of-Rocks Route, or use the Hastings Cutoff route. The Hastings Cutoff was the worst possible choice and is the primary reason why the Donner-Reed Party were so delayed, they got caught in the winter storms of Donner Pass, Nevada-California, and suffered considerable loss of life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I am listing some additional sources about the Cutoff. I only do original research, and cannot comment on the completeness or accuracy of any of these sources– I have not read them. Also, internet addresses and browsers are continually changing and you might encounter problems in viewing these documents.

https://archive.org/details/GR_4538 (The Emigrant's Guide to California, by Joseph Ware, 1849) [I have included Page 27 from Ware's guide. It covers his description of the Cutoff but it is not very accurate.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parting_of_the_Ways_(Wyoming)

https://www.octa-journals.org/convention-book-and-tour-guides/1992-octa-convention-rock-springs-wy

https://wyoshpo.wyo.gov/index.php/programs/national-register/wyoming-listings/view-full-list/825-parting-of-the-ways

https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~tqpeiffer/genealogy/Documents/Ancestral%20Migration%20Archives/Migration%20Photo%20Galleries/(8)%20WESTERN%20MOUNTAIN%20STATES/SUBLETTE-GREENWOOD%20CUTOFF/Page.html

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://wyoshpo.wyo.gov/index.php/files/766/Sweetwater%2520County%2520NR%2520forms/929/Parting-of-the%2520Ways%2520(Oregon%2520Trail%2520Sites)%2520National%2520Register%2520form.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjbr-3FjYqLAxV94MkDHcFtGYIQFnoECBYQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2CA1-RvoEZ26uTwTsJVozE

MAPS

The pages that follow, contain the following maps:

1. The original map from "The Emigrant's Guide to California," by Joseph Ware, 1849.
2. My research map at TOPO! Level-3. This is an intermediate resolution map, showing only the general location of the Cutoff.
3. My research map at TOPO! Level-4. This is a good resolution map with township-range squares (6 miles on a side.)
4. My research map at Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1sGJqlt_1gweT1h9nU-_Vxa9LM8jgV-g
5. Map from the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
6. Map from the US Department of the Interior, National Park Service

NOTE: I did not study the BLM for accuracy or errors, however, I did note that they are confused about what trails go from South Pass to Oregon or California. All trails were used to go to either, however the trail through Fort Bridger fell into disfavor for Oregon-bound emigrants because it was tens of miles longer.

NOTE: I could have also produced resolutions at Level-5, but chose not to create so many pages in this report. The reader that wants high accuracy can refer to the map on Google Maps, or can use the GPS waypoint files on any GIS program.

GPS WAVEPOINT DATABASE ATTACHMENTS:

Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff (Route Only) V34G.csv	Comma delimited file
Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff (Route Only) V34G.gpx	GPX formatted file
Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff (Waypoints Only) V34G.gpx	GPX formatted file
Sublette-Greenwood-Cutoff--Route-Only--V34G.kml	KML formatted file

THE

EMIGRANTS' GUIDE

TO

CALIFORNIA,

CONTAINING EVERY POINT OF INFORMATION FOR THE EMIGRANT—INCLUDING ROUTES, DISTANCES, WATER, GRASS, TIMBER, CROSSING OF RIVERS, PASSES, ALTITUDES, WITH A LARGE MAP OF ROUTES, AND PROFILE OF COUNTRY, &C.,— WITH FULL DIRECTIONS FOR TESTING AND ASSAYING GOLD AND OTHER ORES.

BY JOSEPH E. WARE.

PUBLISHED BY J. HALSALL,
No. 124 MAIN STREET,
ST. LOUIS, MO.

Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff Road

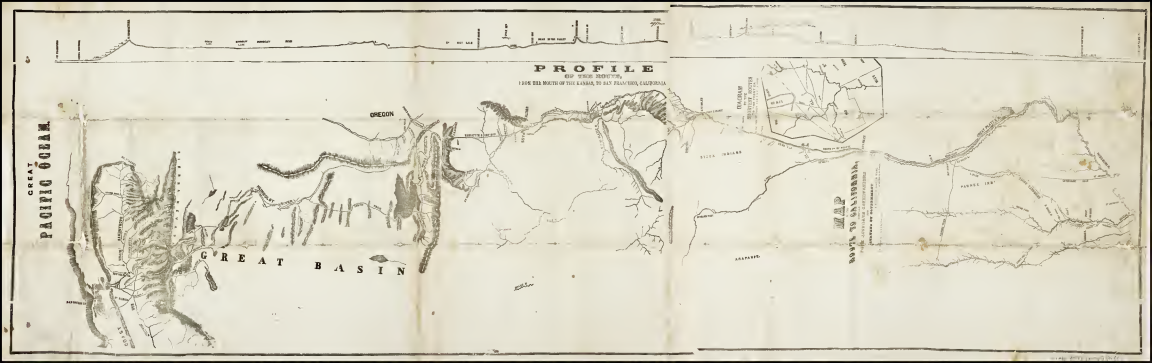
present road is carried some seventy miles out of a direct course, by passing Fort Bridger. When you cross the Dry, or Little Sandy, instead of turning to the left and following the river, strike out across to the Big Sandy, twelve miles. If you get to the river along through the day, camp till near night. From the Big Sandy to Green river, a distance of thirty-five miles, there is not a drop of water. By starting from the Sandy at the cool of the day, you can get across easily by morning. Cattle can travel as far again by night as they can during the day, from the fact that the air is cool, and consequently they do not need water. Recollect, do not attempt to cross during the day. You strike the Green river a few miles above a small stream that comes in from the northwest. After resting a day at Green river, commence your route again. When you leave the river, keep a west, northwest course, to the branch; you strike it in about twelve miles by the trail; by keeping more west, you can reach it sooner. Follow it to its head, then strike across the high plain for the mountains, at the head of Thomas' Fork of the Bear river. Keep on the dividing ridge until you come near the Bear river valley, then descend and cross down to the mouth of the Fork, when you find the main road. This is a fine road all the way; grass and fuel being plenty, and with the exception of the distance between the Sandy and Green rivers, there is fine water. By referring to the large map, you can see that you save nearly five days travel by following what I have taken the liberty to call *Sublette's Cut Off*.]

BIG SANDY. There is neither grass nor water in the next twenty miles, when you reach the

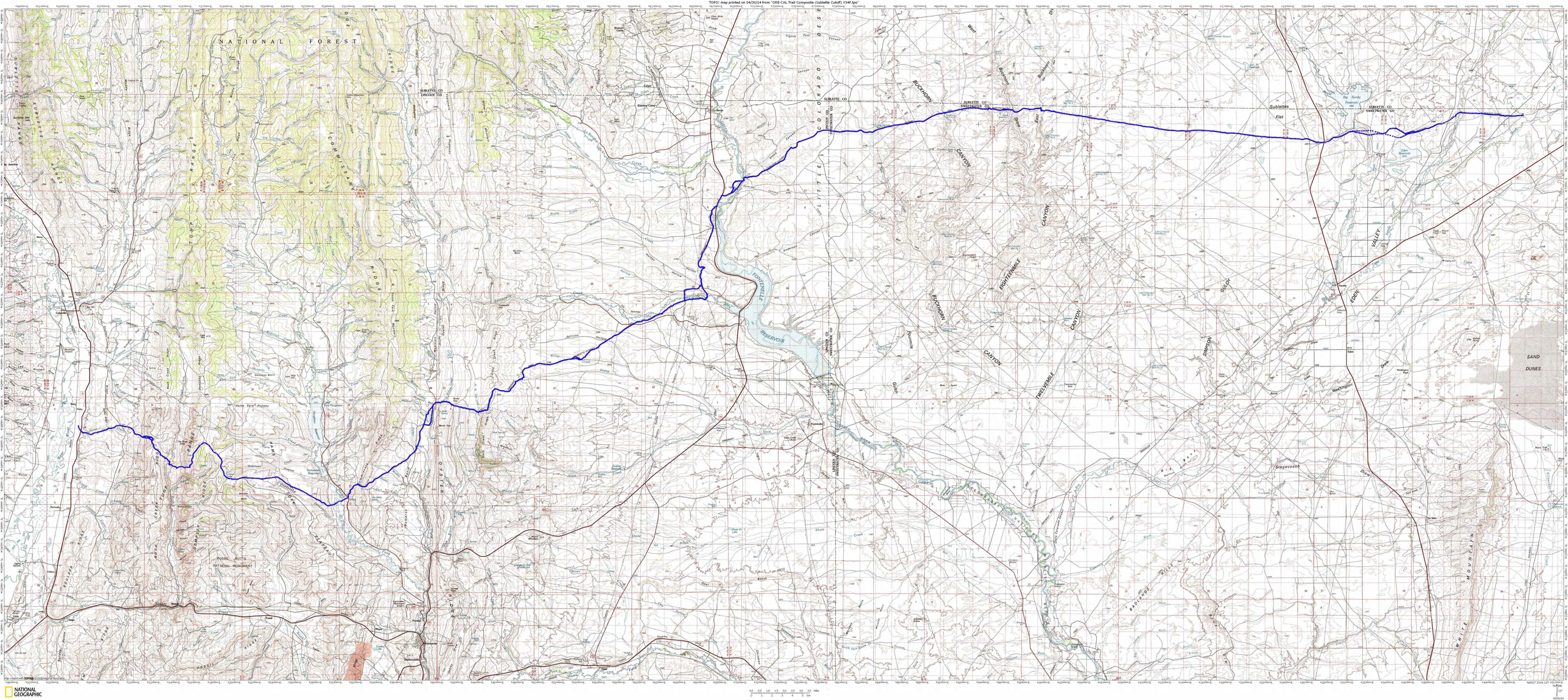
GREEN RIVER FORD—a bold stream, two hundred and fifty feet wide. If the Ford is too deep, go two miles higher up; grass, water and timber are good. For five miles the grass continues good; there is none then to be found for fifteen miles.

BLACK'S FORK is fifteen miles distant. Opportunities for camping are good, timber is not very plenty.

HAM'S FORK, four miles further, is a fine rapid stream, forty feet wide, grass good. Seventeen miles


PROFILE
FROM THE MOUTH OF THE KANSAS, TO SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
GREAT PACIFIC OCEAN.
OREGON
CALIFORNIA
GREAT BASIN
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
SIERRA NEVADA
MAP
ROUTE TO CALIFORNIA

Dry Sandy Cr.
Green River
Bear River
Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff
Western Wyoming
Steve F. Russell, PhD, PE


TOPO! map printed on 04/30/14 from "ORE-CAL Trail Composite (Sublette Cutoff) V34f.tpo"
NATIONAL FOREST
SUBLETTE CO
LINCOLN CO
SWEETWATER CO
COLORADO
Sublettes Flat
SAND DUNES
FONTENELLE RESERVOIR
BLACKHORN CANYON
FIGHTEENMILE CANYON
ELEVENMILE CANYON
TWELVEMILE CANYON
OVLOH
EDEN VALLEY
SIMPSON
Stagecoach Draw
Washington
Big Sandy Reservoir
Little Sandy Creek
Big Sandy Creek
Green River
Blacks Fork
Hams Fork
Smiths Fork
Muddy Creek
Slate Creek
Cottonwood Creek
Sage Creek
Dempsey Ridge
Commissary Ridge
Ryan Ridge
Cassil Ridge
Church Buttes
Fossil Butte National Monument
Kemmerer
Diamondville
Opal
Granger
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Fossil
Cumberland Gap
Oregon Buttes
Wilkins Peak
Table Rock
Bridger Butte
Antelope Flat
Bridger Valley
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Wilkins Peak
Bridger Mountain
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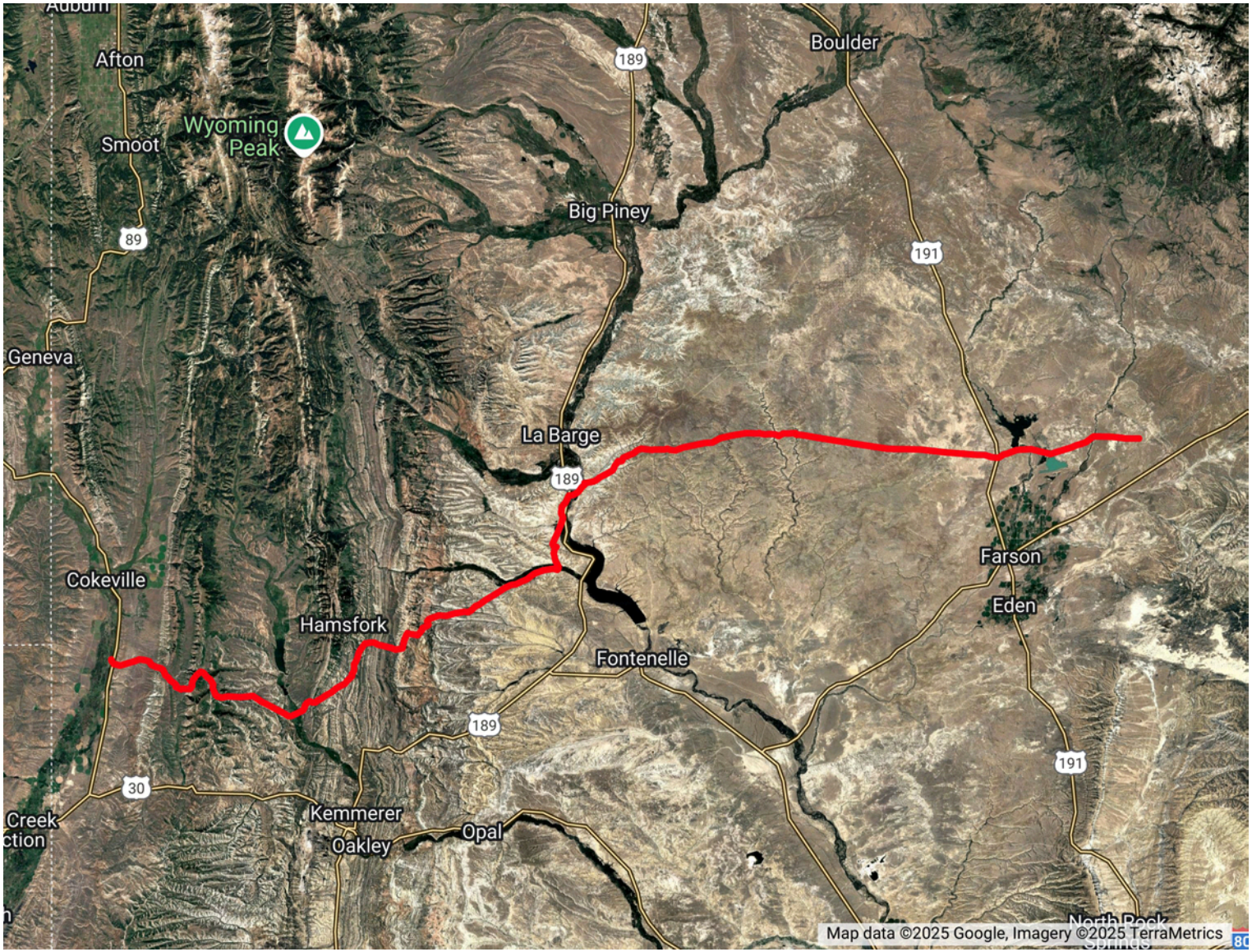
OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS, Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff

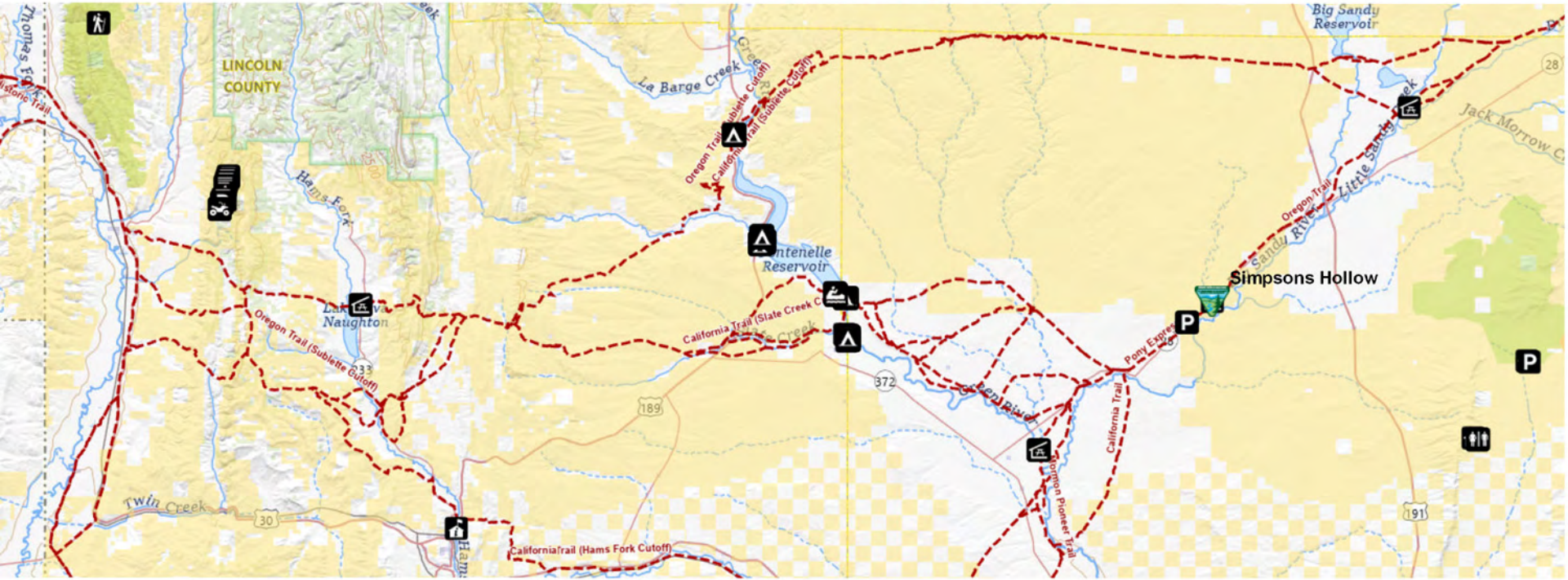
Sublette-Greenwood-Cutoff--Route-Only--V34G.kml

001 TO 3007

This map shows my research on the location of the Sublette-Greenwood Cutoff trail in Western Wyoming. It is displayed to a resolution of approximately 200 feet. Steve F. Russell, PhD, PE 2015



US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)



US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Western Wyoming